

LOVE LIKE HIS

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable “622 service” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: METAPHORS FOR LOVE

Ask each of your teens to come up with an object that can be used as a metaphor for love in some way. They can find something in their own possessions, in the room where you meet, or if weather permits allow them to spend a few minutes outside to collect something. They can choose something that is funny or something that is profound, depending on how comfortable they are with sharing. (Some examples: love is like a paper clip because it holds people together; love is like a blade of grass because it grows in the right conditions, etc.). Give everyone a chance to share the metaphor that they chose with the group. Note: Allow a range of metaphors, even if they seem to be negative or to demonstrate a confused worldview. Just getting the teens to express whatever comes to mind on the topic is an important starting place. Alternatively, you might ask your teens to form small groups and come up with as many metaphors as possible before sharing them.

622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order of service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: WHAT LOVE IS LIKE

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- How is romantic love different from other kinds of love? How is it the same?
- Do you think of love as a feeling or a choice?
- Share the following quote and ask your teens to respond: **“Real romance is really sacrifice”**. – *Ann Voskamp*
- What kinds of sacrifice do you think people only make for someone they really love?

A few things worth pointing out (if they don't otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *Your teens will be able to point out that “eros” or romantic love desires sexual expression. This is one way in which the marriage relationship differs from other love relationships. It is also uniquely designed to be exclusive and enduring. But the qualities that express love: patience, kindness, etc., ought to be common elements in any loving relationship, whether in friendship, as a family member, or as a spouse.*
- *Chances are many of your teens view romantic love as a feeling. But feelings are unreliable. They come and go, and they don't always point us in the right direction. Challenge your teens to consider the connection between choice*

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and feeling; that is, when we choose to behave according to love, the feelings may follow. This choice-over-feelings kind of love is especially important in a relationship founded on commitment.

- *Jesus is our best example of what love looks like: humble, unconditional and sacrificial. Remember Ephesians 5:25? “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”. Timothy Keller further points out that this love was never dependent on our being lovable: “When Jesus looked down from the cross, he didn’t think, ‘I am giving myself to you because you are so attractive to me.’ No, he was in agony, and he looked down at us – denying him, abandoning him, and betraying him – and in the greatest act of love in history, he stayed. He said, ‘Father, forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.’”*
- *Your teens might find this one challenging. It might be a good opportunity to share a story of your own. Perhaps there was a time when you gave up going to an event you were really looking forward to in order to stay with a sick child, or a time when you used money you had saved to spend on yourself in order to spend it on a friend in need instead.*

THE LESSON: 1 CORINTHIANS 13

The first part of the lesson (below) can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

(IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO HELP RESPOND TO QUESTIONS THAT MAY BE RAISED DURING THIS UNIT, WE RECOMMEND “DISCOVERING THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER: A HANDS-ON APPROACH, VOLUME 3: SPECIAL OCCASIONS” BY SUE CARELESS.)

The marriage liturgy speaks of holy matrimony as “a pledge of pure and endless love”. Marrying couples do not commit to cherishing one another for as long as it’s convenient, or for as long as they both feel like it. Rather, in Christian marriage couples choose to love one another in the way that God loves: unconditionally. That’s why the vows recognize that there will be rough times as well as joyful ones: “for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health” (BCP p. 566).

This sort of love can seem like an alien phenomenon in our world. Many of us have lived through experiences of being unloved, betrayed and rejected. The messages we receive in the media often tell us that we must be better versions of ourselves if we are ever to be worthy of love. But God’s love breaks through all of this and tells us that even in the midst of our sin, he loved us enough to die (Romans 5:8), and that nothing can separate us from his love (Romans 8:38-39). In other words, he knows us and he still loves us, and that’s never going to change.

Believers can walk through life in the knowledge that they are loved by God in this amazing way. Christian marriage is a reflection of this love, a living testimony not only within the relationship of husband and wife, but also outwardly to all those who witness the character of their love. The challenge for believers, whether married or not, is to love others in a way that bears witness to the pure and endless love of God.

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The famous “love” passage that we’re about to look at comes from the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians. Paul wasn’t writing about marriage here, instead he was offering correction to a very dysfunctional church. But since dysfunction is a part of the fallen human condition, this passage is filled with application for all of us in each of our relationships, perhaps especially in those that we find most challenging.

Refer to 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13.

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(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS' NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they've just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- Make a chart together of the characteristics identified in this passage as *loving* versus *not loving*.
- What do you think the Corinthians were choosing to value above love?
- What aspects of this "love list" remind you most of God's love?
 What aspects of this "love list" do you think are most important for married couples?
 What aspects of this "love list" do you find hardest in your own relationships?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *Loving: patient, kind, rejoices with the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, never ends; Not loving: envious, boastful, arrogant, rude, insists on its own way, irritable, resentful, rejoices at wrongdoing.*
- *If we look at the broader context, we can see that St. Paul is speaking against wranglings on the topics of unity, worship and especially spiritual gifts in the Church. The Corinthians were placing a great deal of importance on certain spiritual gifts – abilities – that God had sent, intended for the building up of the Church. Rather than receiving these gifts in an attitude of gratitude and humility, they had become a source of arrogance and envy. This is why Paul found it necessary to emphasize the character of love. In order for us to use our gifts effectively, they must flow from the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), and from love in particular.*
- *These three questions are intended to be subjective, so allow your teens some latitude in sharing their opinions. God's love is of course patient and kind, long-suffering and eternal. In Christ, we have seen that God's love is profoundly humble and sacrificial. In marriage, as in other "up close and personal" relationships that your teens may have, the daily irritations of life can intrude causing us to be impatient and uncharitable, bringing out our own failings. In all of this, the example of Christ can inspire, correct, and guide us.*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON'T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU'LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY "AT-HOME CHALLENGE" IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE "FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES", WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

The collect for Palm Sunday focuses on the tender love of God for us, demonstrated in Jesus' humility and sacrifice. Spend some time reflecting on the character of God's love and asking him to help you to love others (especially those closest to you) in this way. Close your time with this collect:

Almighty and everlasting God, who, of thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(THE COLLECT FOR PALM SUNDAY, BCP PAGE 150)

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CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE "PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS" SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the "Grace", the final prayer in the booklet.

1 CORINTHIANS 13: THE CHARACTER OF LOVE

¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

¹³So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.